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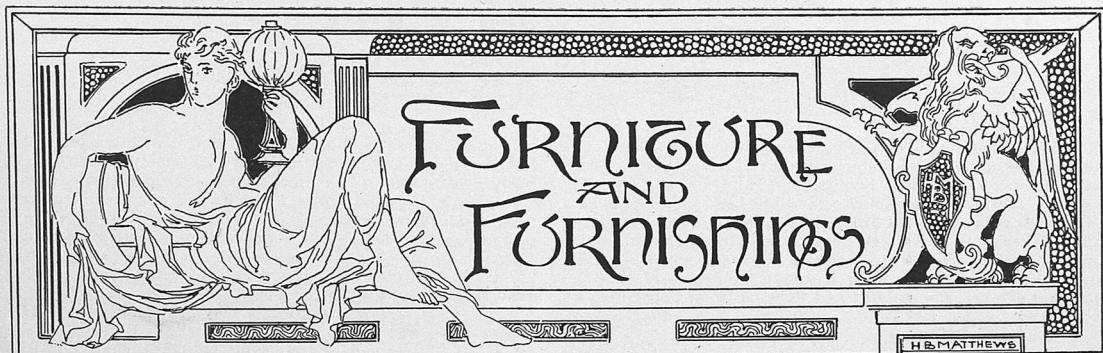
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FASHIONS IN FURNITURE—THE LOUIS SEIZE AND EMPIRE STYLES.

BY JAMES THOMSON.



SINCE writing my last article, which was devoted to the Louis Quatorze and Louis Quinze styles, I have had brought to my attention a newspaper article written by an amateur journalist, from which I beg to quote the following: "The Louis Quinze and Louis Seize forms are both in vogue, and are used indifferently and together. The general style is the same, with subtle modifications of detail which very few people can know how to distinguish; and which are incon-

French, have given us that dainty fashion in furniture and decoration known as the LOUIS SEIZE.

While it is a style of furnishing to be admired and commended, it has also its limitations. For some purposes it is not at all suitable; for example, we should not furnish a Hall or Dining-Room in such a style, lacking as it does virility and strength. Pure as it is in form it is altogether effeminate, and is essentially the style of the courtier and grand dame, and to serve as a background for the costumes of a gay and festive people; it exemplifies in a marked degree that daintiness of touch, which the French succeed in imparting to even the least of their creations.

In the furnishing of my lady's boudoir it is the style par excellence, nor does it come amiss in the parlor or bedroom; for it should be borne in mind that one may have it in the natural wood (perfectly light in color), gilded or white and gold, or simply enameled in plain color.

There is a certain modification of the style—freed from much of the elaboration of ornament, which is especially suitable for sleeping rooms, and for enameling in the delicate tints, such as pale green, blue, pink, ivory, etc. These may be plain; or further ornamented by hand painting or gilding.

The furniture and architecture of the Louis XVI. period is designed on rather severe and angular lines. The paneling is formed of straight moldings, and the columns and pilasters are generally "fluted" or "reeded," and surmounted by a Corinthian or Ionic capitol; sometimes the fluting is partly filled with reeds or beading; and the egg and dart molding is much employed, as are also Sevres plaques in delicate coloring; often depicting pastoral scenes and the triumphs of Cupid's bow and quiver of arrows, and the hymeneal flambeau may be said to be a characteristic feature of



FIG. 1. PANEL ORNAMENT IN LOUIS XVI. STYLE.

sequent to all but connoisseurs of furniture."

This is a fair example of the silly twaddle one frequently reads in the newspapers and in the magazines devoted to woman's interests, and would be unworthy of notice were it not for the mischief it works among people who have a sincere desire to post themselves in such matters. It is a most mortifying experience to one in company. When relying on the truth of a statement such as this, one makes a positive assertion, only to discover later oneself in the wrong. Some one has remarked that civilized peoples consist of two parties—the leaders and the led. If this be so, then it is essential to lead and be led aright.

Now, the differences between the styles in question are so great that "The wayfaring man, though a fool, need not err therein." They have nothing in common except the fashion of gilding. One who is not conversant with these styles may get confused and transpose them; but a person must be devoid of the observant faculties who cannot see the radical differences that exists between them.

With the accession of Louis Seize to the throne of France came a reaction against the immorality and corruption that had signalized the previous reign. This influence extended to furniture and architecture, and was soon observable in a return to the pure classic form of antiquity. The adoption of these pure forms, the severity of which was chastened by the wedding to them of some of the more exuberant fancies of the

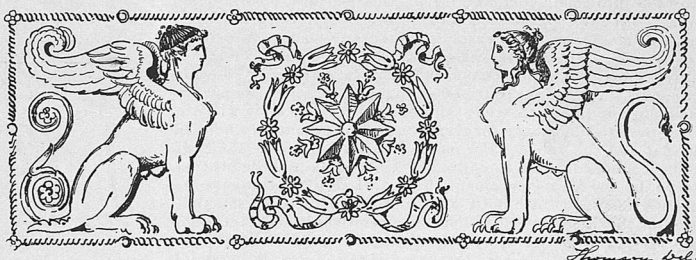


FIG. 2. PANEL ORNAMENT IN EMPIRE STYLE.

the style, although not original with it, as shown in the panel ornament Fig. 1. The legs of tables and chairs are usually tapering and slender, sometimes in the form of a quiver of arrows, and very generally partaking of that form, while the general effect of outline is rather severe and classical; the enrichments both in carving and ormolu are fully as rich in effect and expensive in execution as in the previous style, but extremely refined and restrained in treatment.

The chair (Fig. 3) is suitable for a parlor, and should be in white and gold or all gilt. The small chair (Fig. 5) would look well in any light wood or all gold.

The dressing table (Fig. 7) may be executed in prima vera or white and gold.

That fashion developed during the ascendancy of Napoleon the first, is known as the Empire style, or to state it more correctly, the style of the first Empire.

While considered more classic than the Louis Seize, it lacks much of its refinement and grace; in the detail following with painful precision the Greek, or rather Greeco Roman and Egyptian styles; while ever beautiful lines are plentiful; the ornament is elaborated to such a wonderful degree of exactitude that one becomes satiated and sighs for some departure,—

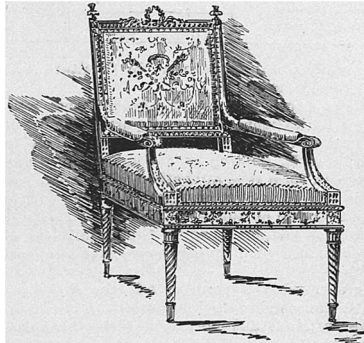


FIG. 3. LOUIS SEIZE.

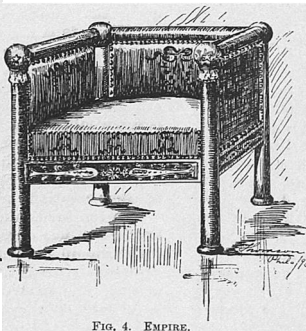


FIG. 4. EMPIRE.

some whimsical wantonness of line to break the monotony of perfect order and precision; gorgeous though it be in its vivid colorings of emerald green, china blue and bright red; and its golden tracery of positive ormolu against the background of dark hued mahogany; it can never have the charm that the Louis Seize has in lending a homelike atmosphere to a modern living apartment, employed in its purity; we should say that it is more suitable for a scheme of decoration for the interior of a public building than for a modern dwelling. In fact in looking over the plates representing the interiors designed by the great architects of Napoleon's time, one can scarcely credit that they represent rooms for people to live in—they look so cold and dismal, in spite of the excessive elaboration of brazen ornamental detail.

In the ornamental section of this style will be found a perfect mine of ideas for the designer and student. A careful study will well repay the trouble involved; beautiful conceptions are crowded into small compass, which, enlarged and possibly simplified, will develop into the most graceful and striking ornamental features imaginable. For example: what can be more pronounced, yet so full of graceful movement, as the well-known wreath of laurel bound with bow knot ending in a wreath of flowing streamers. Yet this is but one of many effects just as pretty, ready to our hand. A study and analysis of the style will discover material in plenty for every variety of decoration, both in the flat and the round. For outline work especially is the style to be commended, as the ornament is usually well defined, as shown in the panel ornament, Fig. 2. I think that where we make a mistake is in blindly adopting the methods of the artificers of the Empire period in our choice of colors and materials. The wood generally employed is mahogany, finished very dark and with a bright lustre, the ornamentation being brass of polished or dull finish. The resulting effect is rather abrupt and startling, the brass proving such a decided contrast to the deep red mahogany that the effect is often garish and vulgar, especially, as is frequently the case, the castings are as they come from the mould and have not had the outline brought to sharp relief by tooling. I think the effect is much better when the ornament is neatly carved in low relief and brass is used in moderation and simply to emphasize the general design. If mahogany is the wood used, it should be darkened very slightly, if at all. The Empire style is one that shows to great advantage in white enamel finish. The decoration may be wood carving or polished brass, or both may be combined with success.

In the ornamentation of the Empire style the classic motives are fully drawn upon, but elaborated in a peculiar manner; the classic wreath and festoon are much in evidence, as are the

ram's head and the sphinx. Trophy ornaments are a prominent feature; in fact everything indicative of triumph and the conquering campaigns of the modern Cæsar is made use of; semi-classic medallions, butterflies, Athenian bees and the letter N are freely used. The ornament is of a wing nature and has the appearance, even when hand work, of being cast from a mould. However, in the hands of a good designer and adapter who knows what to discard and what to retain, the style has great possibilities.

The chair, Fig. 4, may be in mahogany or oak, and is well adapted for hall or library. Fig. 6 is a good example of the lighter chair and may be used for a parlor and will look well in mahogany or enamel finish. The dressing table, Fig. 8, in this style here shown, is designed to be in pale blue, enamel finish, the ornament to be partly carving and silver mountings. All the delicate lines are intended to be in silver. Fig. 9 shows an adaptation of the lounge on which Madame Recamier is pictured reclining, as seen in the Musée de Louvre, Paris. Fig. 10 represents suggestions for table legs in the Louis XVI. and Empire styles respectively.

RANDOM NOTES.

BY JAMES THOMSON.

A FASHIONABLE WOOD.

PRIMA VERA, sometimes called white mahogany, has evidently met with popular approval, particularly in bedroom furniture. It is a beautiful wood much resembling satin wood in color, but costing much less, and therefore, more likely to continue in popular favor.

In order to fully bring out the latent beauties of the markings, this wood should always be finished with a high polish. This method of finishing, although not the most lasting, is the one best calculated to bring out the full beauties of the grain which prima vera possesses in a remarkable degree.

The dull shellac finish, however, while it fails in this respect, is the method possessing the most lasting qualities, being what might be termed an elastic finish and less liable to show the

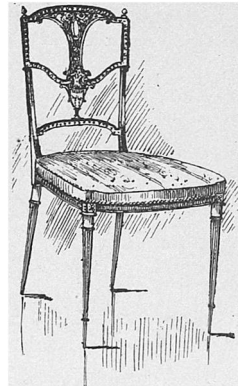


FIG. 5. LOUIS SEIZE.

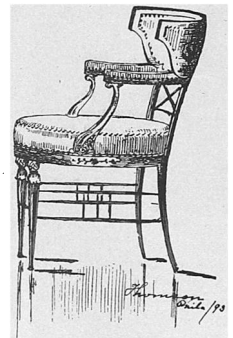


FIG. 6. EMPIRE.

effects of usage than the more brittle gloss of the other. Furniture and interior woodwork finished with a high polish demand especial care in handling and dusting. Indentations and scratches assume discouraging prominence on such surfaces and are not easily effaced short of complete re-polishing.

FASHIONABLE FADS.

Can anything be more ridiculous than the haste displayed by our people in adopting the latest fads in their domestic surroundings. The capacity for rapid production in our factories is now so great that a fashion has no more than met

THE DECORATOR AND FURNISHER.

with public approval than it is done to death by the enormous quantities thrown on the market. Six months, or at most a year, is about as long as a style will last in our present rapid age.

Take the Empire style for instance, it cannot last more than a year, and in two years it is a doubtful question whether

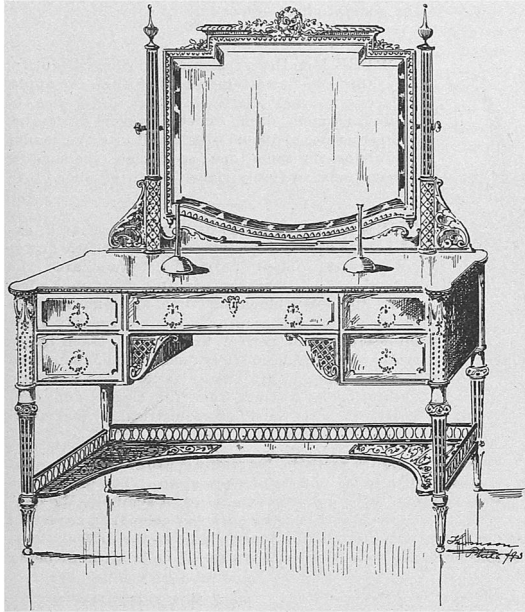


FIG. 7. LADIES' TOILET TABLE. LOUIS SEIZE STYLE.

the Louis Quinze will be tolerated in "smart circles," and indeed the signs are not wanting of its waning power to attract. Under present conditions as soon as a style has become "common" among the multitude, the leaders of fashion drop it. How different in the last century, when these fashions had their origin! The Louis Quinze was the style that reigned to the exclusion of all others for more than sixty years. The Louis Seize also had a run of twenty years, cut short by the French Revolution.

There are certain styles that never seem out of date, such as the Colonial of our own country, and the semi-classic productions of the English designers of the eighteenth century. These, with the more vigorous productions of the renaissance period, will ever find favor with persons of an artistic temperament. Artists unerringly select such examples for their surroundings.

CHANGES IN PUBLIC TASTE.

It is interesting to note the change of late years in the designs of bedroom furniture. When one recalls the heavy outlines so common as recent as five years ago, and contrasts them with the delicate proportions so popular just at present, one must admit that we have made a move in the right direction. Many of the headboards of the bedsteads of the past are eight or nine feet in height and ponderous in proportion. At the present time, the fashionable bed does not measure over five feet high and is of a decidedly light character, recalling the chaste lines of the talented Sheraton and the Adam Brothers. Much of the bedroom furniture that meets with popular approval is designed on decidedly "French" lines, embodying the graceful proportions that the term as a rule implies.

Popular taste has also changed in the choice of material. Black walnut, so popular twenty years ago, can seldom find appreciation now, so entirely has it gone out of fashion that first-class dealers never have anything made of it in stock if they can avoid it. However, this is only one of the freaks of fashion, and walnut will regain its place in public favor once more.

The public of the past have had also a strange antipathy to light woods, many people seemingly having an impression that only the dark woods are valuable. As a matter of fact there are many light woods that are quite as expensive as the dark, notably satin wood, and if one desires to use the very best selected pine, it will be found by no means a cheap wood. There are of course some of the light woods now in use that are comparatively inexpensive, but at the rate we are now using them up, it is only a question of time, possibly a few years, before they will become scarce and consequently valuable.

DECORATIVE NOTES.

BY MARY F. HARMAN.

FINE white linen is much used in fancy work, and charming photograph frames are now made of it. The linen is powdered all over with Dresden china flowers, either painted or embroidered, and this is used to cover pasteboard frames which have one or two openings, or which are several fold, as the case may be. The linen may be pasted or sewed on the cardboard, but the work must be very neatly done.

Those in the shops are so perfectly made that they look almost like the Dresden china which they imitate.

A large purse bag, although nothing new, is very convenient for use as a work bag, or for a carriage bag for parcels. It may be made of various materials, but one seen by the writer was of olive green plush embroidered with gold thread and floselle. For this bag one yard and a quarter of plush is required, with some suitable silk of the same color for a lining. Join to-

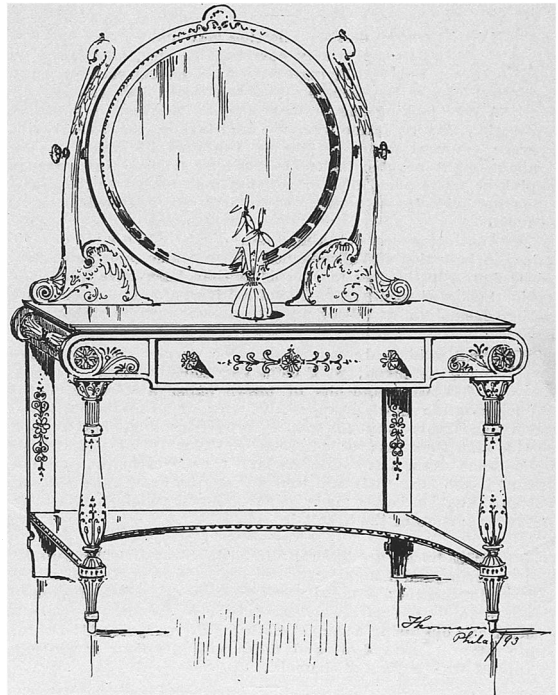


FIG. 8. LADIES' TOILET TABLE. EMPIRE STYLE.

gether at the selvedge edges, leaving an opening of ten inches in the middle part. Gather the ends securely together and finish with a silk tassel or pompon. Two gilt rings should be used for securing the bag when it is filled.

An infant's bath blanket or Afghan, is made of double Germantown wool, in white or blue, or white and pink.

With a coarse hook make a chain the desired length and work in single crochet, taking up only the back loop of the stitch. At the seventh stitch of the chain put in two; at the fourteenth skip one; and so on, alternately widening and narrowing at every seventh stitch. This produces a Vandyked ef-

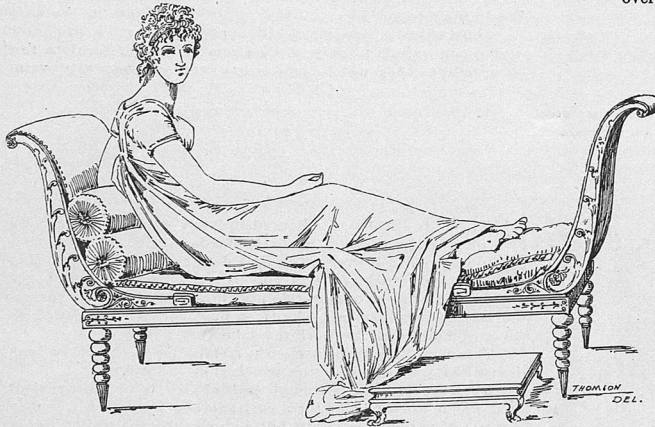


FIG. 9. RECAMIER CHAISE LONGUE, EMPIRE STYLE. AFTER DRAWING IN THE MUSÉE DU LOUVRE.

fect which is very handsome. Crochet three ridges of white and three of the color. Fringe is not used on these blankets.

ANYONE who understands netting may make a very effective sofa pillow by simply covering it with blue denim on turkey red, and laying over this a netting made of white cord. Finish at the corners with a thick cord and tassels.

A cool looking lamp shade for summer use is made by covering a wire frame with net and laying over it the bright green sea-weed which is sold by the yard. Allow it to fall about eight or nine inches below for a fringe. Now arrange pink or white pond lilies, or very flat pink roses over the shade, leaving wide spaces between them, as a crowded look must be avoided.

Another delicate looking shade is made of a strip of wide lace in imitation of Valenciennes. With water color paints tint the figures in the lace in pale colors that harmonize (pink and blue look well together) and knot a fringe of silk to match into the edge. Join, and draw up with a narrow white ribbon.

PAPER pillows are comfortable for use in a hammock, and have the advantage of being economical as well.

Old letters and bits of brown paper are better for the purpose than newspapers, as the odor of printer's ink is not very agreeable. Cut the paper into strips about half an inch wide and then tear or cut small half inch pieces from these. Use some of the soft cotton material for the casing and do not stuff it too full. It is said that during the Franco-German war many English ladies made paper pillows, which they sent to France for use in the hospitals.

LARGE horns are often mounted in brass and fitted up for lamps, and if highly polished they are quite handsome. To do this they should be well scraped with a bit of glass to secure an even surface, and then rubbed with powdered bath brick and oils, using a flannel cloth for the purpose. Afterwards use rotten stone and oil and finish with dry flour or whitening, applied with a piece of chamolis.

IT is said that sea-shells may be cleaned by boiling them in quick lime for some hours and then giving the dark outer crust a bath of muriatic acid. After this they should be polished with oil and common clay, and are then ready for painting on.

CHOICE of three routes to St. Louis by the New York Central; four trains daily.

DECORATIVE NOTES.

ADECORATION is only the part of a whole to which it must be subordinate, and it is weakness, not strength, to overstep its limitations. In room furnishing, a picture becomes a decoration and must be in harmony with the general effect—especially in color.

THERE is nothing more decoratively beautiful than the flowering trees of spring—the apple, cherry and dogwood. Splendid lines of trunk and stem, dark, sometimes even grotesque, against masses of bloom which melt into the tender sky, almost the same tone; so delicate, the shadow is not shade, but only richer depth of color.

THE beauty of stems is never appreciated, except by the Japanese—the only artistic flower lovers. Their national flowers are the cherry and the chrysanthemum; they make festivals for their blooming time, and almost every *kakemono*, bronze or lacquer, bears witness to their intense love and perfect knowledge. Much interesting work has been lately done in the Japanese school. One might almost term it the romantic decoration as distinct from the classic and conventional, based solely on geometrical arrangement.

JAPANESE design is realistic, becoming conventional only as it shapes itself into the limits of decoration. The art of the Persian is symbolic, now the symbol of a symbol. We cannot read, but only see and feel the gorgeous color they have told their story in. We catch the tones, but not the articulations, yielding ourselves to a passionate dream of color without being

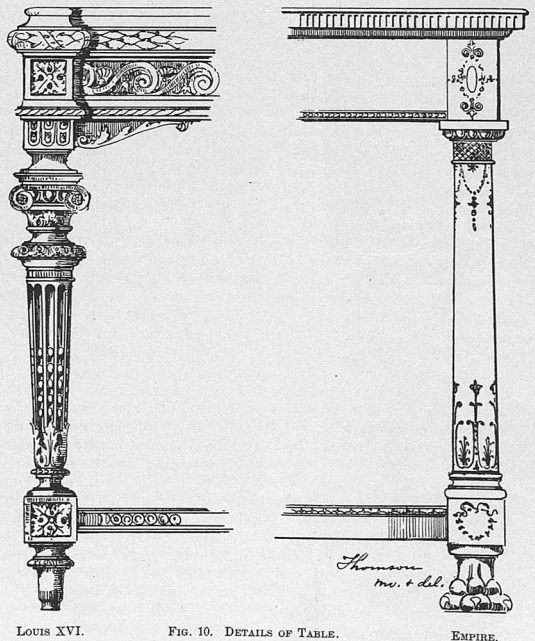


FIG. 10. DETAILS OF TABLE.

held back by any story it may tell; without looking in the corner for the name of the man who made it and basing our love for him on the fact that he is—not an Academician. The Persian has been most generous, has given us his work and not asked us to think of him.